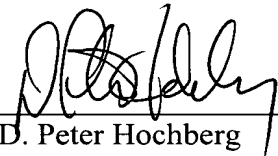


the original claim 1 is amended in this preliminary amendment.

The foregoing amendments to the application are made to place it in conformance with U.S. patent practice and to delete multiple-dependencies in the claims, thus reducing the government filing fee. Accordingly, prosecution on the merits hereof is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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**EXPRESS MAIL CERTIFICATION UNDER 37 CFR 1.10**

I hereby certify that the foregoing Preliminary Amendment and any document(s) referred to as attached hereto is being deposited with the United States Postal Service on the date indicated below in an envelope as "Express Mail Post Office to Addressee" service mailing Label Number EK980729435US addressed: Box PCT, Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

Date: 12/22/2000

  
Christine A. Kotran